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# Release of papers on JFK murder

## Thousands of documents are being made public. The most interesting are probably the CIA's.

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WASHINGTON — Experts are hoping that the release today of documents related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy answers some nagging questions, including whether Lee Harvey Oswald had any ties to the U.S. government.

Thousands of documents, including files from the Warren Commission, investigative panels and congressional committees, will be released through the National Archives. But it is the release of more than 100,000 pages from the CIA that is attracting the most attention, since many of the CIA's records have been secret until now.

"I think that there will be a lot of interesting information," said James Lesar, director of the Assassination Archives and Research Center. "There will be plenty of information that will be of great interest to researchers."

The Warren Commission concluded in 1964 that Oswald, acting alone, killed Kennedy with a rifle from his perch in a sixth-floor window at the Texas School Book Depository in downtown Dallas.

Since then, however, numerous conspiracy theories have surfaced, revolving around whether Oswald was the lone gunman and, if he was, whether he might have been acting at the behest of the CIA, FBI or organized crime.

Will the documents contain anything new on the unresolved issues surrounding Kennedy's death?

### Panels had CIA access

That is difficult to determine, especially since commissions that have studied the assassination over the years have had access to the CIA files.

"People who believe the agency did it are paranoid, and naive to believe that they would be stupid enough to leave footprints," said Robert Blakey, a Notre Dame law professor who served as staff director for the 1978 House Select Committee that studied the assassination.

Blakey, who studied volumes of CIA documents, concluded there is "no smoking gun there."

Lesar noted there was a variety of things to watch for, particularly documents that suggest any link between Oswald and the agency.

For example, any information relating to CIA operatives, including the late David Phillips, could be important. Phillips, who headed CIA covert operations in the Western Hemisphere at the time of Kennedy's assassination, may have had some contact with Oswald before the killing.

Antonio Veciana, a Cuban exile, has stated that he saw Oswald in the presence of a CIA operative he knew as Maurice Bishop.

"The 1978 House Select Committee is said to have investigated the possibility that David Phillips might be Maurice Bishop," Lesar said. "There for years have been reports that the committee had considered having Phillips indicted for perjury after deposing him."

### Conspiracy suspected

No mention of this controversy is included in the House Select Committee's report. The panel concluded that Kennedy was probably the victim of a conspiracy, with a second gunman firing at him but missing.

Also, any CIA information on a trip Oswald took to Mexico City in September 1963 could be important.

While there, he unsuccessfully sought visas from the Cuban and Soviet Embassies. He met with a Soviet vice consul, whom the agency believed to be a KGB assassination and sabotage expert. The remainder of Oswald's six days in Mexico are unaccounted for.

The documents are being released today under a law enacted last year to speed the distribution of government files on Kennedy's murder.

The law exempts from immediate disclosure any records that would identify "an intelligence agent whose identity currently requires protection" or confidential sources who would face "substantial risk of harm" if identified.

A CIA spokesman said Saturday that 10,000 pages of agency material would be withheld under that provision but that 125,000 pages would be released to the archives.

Withheld documents must be described by the agency holding them and are subject to review by a five-member presidential panel that could compel their disclosure.

But that panel has yet to be set up. President George Bush refused to name anyone to the review board during the presidential campaign last year, and President Clinton has let lapse the law's Jan. 25 deadline for nominations.